

9 June, 2014

Dear Dr. Gysi, Dear members and supporters of Die Linke,

We are Israeli citizens who are active against our government's policies of occupation, colonialism and apartheid. We have been promoting human rights and peace for many years within our society. Prior to Dr. Gregor Gysi's visit to Israel, we would like to clarify that his positions as well as Die Linke's, on the aforementioned issues are totally unacceptable and incompatible with the basic principles of equality and justice.

The Government of Israel is systematically expelling Palestinians from their lands, not only in the occupied West Bank but throughout historic Palestine. This includes the recently approved Praver plan for expelling the Negev (Naqab) indigenous Bedouin population from their land[1]. The Israeli economy exploits Palestinian workers, including children who are sometimes placed under dangerous conditions for slave-like wages, instead of going to school[2]. Israel regularly detains numerous Palestinians without trial as a form of political repression. Many young children are arrested in the middle of the night and are subjected to interrogations in which they may even be tortured[3].

Die Linke is a significant political party in an affluent and influential Germany. Successive German governments have been consistently complicit in the crimes committed by Israeli governments against the Palestinian people through financial, diplomatic and military support of our government, as well as actions aimed at shielding Israel from due criticism. We welcome the visible change in German public opinion and the growing willingness to discuss the ongoing crimes which are committed by the Israeli government. We also commend the decisions by some German companies, such as Deutsche Bahn, not to take part in these crimes[4].

Unfortunately, Die Linke and its leadership support such Israeli policies. The federal body of Die Linke had stated the following: That calling for a one democratic state in Palestine/Israel is anti-Semitic; that the BDS campaign is anti-Semitic; and that the flotilla breaking the siege of Gaza is anti-Semitic. These claims are patently false and can easily be refuted:

- A one democratic state discourse insists on having equality for all, on the respect of multiculturalism and the rights of minorities. It is a beacon of light in an otherwise dark and racist discourse which is promoted by Israel as a form of "solution" to the conflict. This discourse is based on the notion of ethnic-supremacy and the idea that having more people of a certain ethnic group, namely Palestinians, is nothing short of a security threat to the State of Israel and should be dealt with by the security apparatus of the state.

- The BDS campaign demands that Israel abides by its obligations under international law and respect universally recognized human rights. It is opposed to all forms of racism, including Zionism and anti-Semitism, and it is worthwhile mentioning that a large number of Jews worldwide play key roles in the BDS campaign.

- Finally, you chose to take a clear stand against challenging the barbaric and inhumane siege of Gaza. As result of an Israeli political decision, 95% of Gaza's water is toxic and not fit for human consumption; the Israeli Ministry of Defense went as far as drafting formulas calculating the allowed caloric intake of the 1.6 million people living there. They had even amended the formulas in order to suit cultural differences, claiming that Palestinians do not require much fresh fruits and vegetables and would need more sugar, white flour and oil instead[5].

This siege had been challenged by a few brave human rights activists who were brutally beaten and some murdered on the high seas, by armed and dangerous militants. Their commanders have orchestrated the massacre of 1400 people in Gaza, including 400 children,

in the winter of 2008-2009. Yet, you claim that challenging this murderous and inhumane siege is a form of racism?

Dr. Gysi took things a step further by claiming that anti-Zionism is in itself an illegitimate standpoint for the German left and for Die Linke in particular[6]. He claims that anti-Zionism either stems from anti-Semitism or has been proven to be out of touch with reality like the case of anti-Zionist Jews.

The Zionist project in Palestine is based on the ethnic cleansing of the land from its indigenous people and on ethnic-supremacist ideals. Both of these are at the basis of the many racist laws and practices implemented by the State of Israel against those who were expelled and those who remained on their land[7]. Claiming that our role as anti-Zionists is either based on racism or out of touch with reality is a vile attempt which tries to discredit the opposition to the Israeli brutal military occupation and apartheid.

Furthermore, such a claim against anti-Zionism is also an attempt to reinvent history. Last March, the Israeli Knesset had legislated a law that criminalizes orthodox Jews who choose to study the bible instead of enlisting in the Israeli army, while in turn sanctioning the Yeshiva schools who teach the bible. The response came in the form of over half a million ultra-orthodox Jews, who are citizens of Israel, demonstrating on the streets of Jerusalem while claiming that “the State of Israel is fighting against the Kingdom of Heaven”. This act of repression is but the latest step in the Zionist struggle against Judaism. Even before the Zionist state was founded, its leaders were in direct opposition to orthodox Judaism. In Jerusalem of 1924, the Zionist leadership decided to assassinate Jacob Israel de Haan, the spokesperson of a community of 60,000 staunch anti-Zionist and ultra-orthodox Jews. De Haan’s political activity in securing unlimited Jewish migration to Palestine which was free of any Zionist aspirations, was apparently a good enough reason to kill him as he finished his afternoon prayer, as well as kill the hope for a peaceful coexistence between Jews and non-Jews in Palestine[8].

Therefore, the misuse of the term anti-Semitism in order to protect the criminal and racist regime in Israel is factually, historically and morally flawed. We negate the notion that any criticism of the criminal policies of the state necessarily stems from anti-Jewish tendencies. This claim, which treats any Jew around the world as necessarily supportive of such grave crimes is a highly racist and dangerous statement to make, a statement which must not be acceptable in the 21st century.

In view of this reality, we call on the German left, and more specifically Die Linke and Dr. Gysi, to support the global campaign for BDS which is led by Palestinian civil society organizations[9]. This non-violent, democratic and moral tool is the international community’s way of countering Israel’s anti-democratic and violent actions. It has been proven time and time again that without international pressure, our government will continue its systematic and brutal violations of human rights and international law. Any left-wing party throughout the world, and especially so in Germany, should appreciate the need for an international effort that will end Israel’s impunity and will obligate it to act in line with the basic principles which are required of all nations of the world.

As a first step, the German left may choose to be neutral rather than stand by the oppressed. Die Linke and its leadership may end their financial and diplomatic support of apartheid, i.e. treating Israel as you would treat any other state and by doing so stand on the right side of history. We would naturally appreciate your assistance in ending apartheid which is a crime

against humanity, but all that we demand is that you end your complicity in crime.

As Israeli dissidents who benefit from the system of supremacy and oppression, we are morally obligated to challenge it until equality, freedom and justice prevail. We urge you to do the same.

Sincerely,

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